

VZCZCXRO2172

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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2425
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 4907
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2670
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2535
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 3151
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000306

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EEB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SOCI](#) [ECON](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: FEMALE GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES RECEIVE CASH
GIFTS FOR WOMEN'S DAY

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) Women in Turkmenistan have been given 40 manats (\$14) each as a gift on the occasion of the forthcoming International Women's Day on March 8. The tradition of presenting women with monetary gifts was introduced by former President Saparmurat Niyazov in 2001. Niyazov later replaced Women's Day with the three-day spring holiday of Nowruz celebrated on March 20, 21, and 22. In January 2008, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov reinstated March 8 as a national holiday honoring women. On this occasion, women of all ages, including female children, receive money as a gift.

¶3. (SBU) In the past, the government began dispersing money only after former President Niyazov had issued a resolution to that end, which would normally appear in the official press on the eve of the holiday, according to local staff. Since such a presidential resolution did not appear in the official press this year, the rumor spread that possibly the government had ended the practice. Pol/Econ local staff confirmed that state organizations, enterprises, universities, schools and kindergartens began dispersing the money beginning the week of March 2.

¶4. (SBU) A distinctive feature of the traditional activity this year was that all eligible females, regardless of age, received cash gifts. (NOTE: A woman is considered eligible for this gift if she is attached to a government institution in one of the following capacities: employee, pensioner, student or kindergartener. END NOTE.) In the past, heads of organizations and enterprises, in order to cut expenses, presented less expensive gifts instead of cash. For example, female textile workers received towels or a bathrobe set, and schoolchildren and kindergarteners received educational games and toys. A friend of a Pol/Econ local staff member, however, said that her 5-year old daughter received a 40 manat cash gift for Women's Day. A Pol/Econ staffer's daughter-in-law, who worked at a textile factory and currently is on maternity leave, said that the cash gift was a welcome addition to the family's budget.

¶5. (SBU) The Women's Day holiday in Soviet-era Turkmenistan was intended to celebrate the achievements of female workers, and would include state ceremonies that showcased the government's

achievements in improving the status of women. After Turkmenistan became independent, the celebrations lost their feminist and political overtones, and in present-day Turkmenistan the focus has been re-directed to more traditional values for women as "the guardians of family, hearth and home". This year, government-sponsored events during the week leading up to the holiday centered largely on Turkmen women's contributions in art, fashion, theatre and music.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: It is not surprising that the holiday has experienced alterations along the way as the state itself has seen much change as well. For the women who are old enough to remember the original themes of the holiday, it must feel somewhat like a step back in regard to the role of women in this society. END COMMENT.

MILES